Selected Focus Group Quotes

**Passion**

“I think you need a specific passion, that it gives you a various sense of self and a good center which can eventually help you in other activities, which you might not be as invested in or as passionate about, but because you have that foundation in another activity it is to your benefit.” 17y/o Male

**IMPORTANCE OF YOUTH VOICE**

**Valuing Youth Input in Policy and Decision-Making**

“Cause a lot of times they say that [they want an adolescent’s opinion], they don’t give a shit what we think. They’re like ‘Oh this is good for them, let’s do this.’ We are different people, we have different thoughts, and we are unique in every aspect of everything.” 19 y/o male

**Basic Respect for Youth’s Decision-Making Capacity and Health Care**

“I am terrified of doctors, like I won’t go and half the time it’s because I tell them I can’t take pills and then they prescribe me ten pills. Like I can’t swallow them, like it just doesn’t work with my body. So… and then, on top of that, half the time some of them are just rude. Like they don’t believe what you say because of your age.” 18 y/o female

“I “At like the counseling center they totally give you the option. Do you wanna be prescribed something or do you wanna go a different route? I totally said different route. The stuff they worked on, like breathing techniques and stuff, I feel totally work a lot better than just being put on something.” 19 y/o female

**SUPPORTIVE RELATIONSHIPS**

**Connection**

“I have a pastor at my church that’s really good…but he was the rock n’ roll type, you know the partying. He finally turned his life around. He helps all of the youth at our church. Any kind of problems they have got, he has been through it.” 16 y/o male
“Someone to help motivate them, keep them going, cause after awhile you just get burnt out on it. You don’t have anyone motivating you and….just gets boring and everything” 17 y/o, male  
(discussing behavior change around exercise and nutrition)

“The first time I met her [the adult coordinator of a youth leadership group] was this year, but I knew from like the beginning she was nice and I felt comfortable around her. The way she talks to you like she do, she keeps it real. She be like ‘You do this, you do this, you gonna have these consequences. But if you need somebody even you make a mistake, you can come to me.’ See people don’t say that, they just tell you your mistake and your consequence.” 17 y/o female

**Importance of Parents**

“My mom tells me to carry a condom with me in my wallet every time. Every time.” 16 y/o male

**Need for Positive, Non-Judgmental Relationships**

“Like me, I would love to know because I’m starting to diet and I want to lose weight but I don’t want to be anorexic or I don’t wanna lose a lot of weight- I don’t want to stop eating. So I want somebody to tell me what would be the right food for a diet, a teenager to get on a diet. And how much exercise I should get…you know, stuff like that.” 15 y/o female

“If you doin’ something …and your parents or your friends they support you, they basically have your back in what you need to do. Or they don’t have your back, and they should give you positive criticism if criticism is needed. Nobody wants to be down all the time. You need that type of support and encouragement.” 17 y/o male

“If you know there’s people in the world that do stuff cause they don’t feel like it, they got low self esteem. Why don’t people take the initiative and give a compliment to somebody like once a day like, ‘You look nice,’ or that can help people with emotional stress, you know.” 15 y/o male

“I mean, like don’t use your personal judgment and your personal opinion on my schooling. Like, when I’m in school that’s my focus. Yeah, I have a kid, and yeah, I think about him every minute, but I’m here to learn….Your job is to teach me. You’re not getting paid to like, criticize me about having a kid at my age.” 16 y/o female

**Encouragement**

“You need a good amount of encouragement, outside encouragement. I think you have to be surrounded by people that to some degree share the same, not necessarily passions, but same aspirations of succeeding and having balance in their life.” 17 y/o male

“If you are talking about being healthy, in the future you are going to be making your own decisions and now is the time to kind of figure out how to do that with somebody to fall back on in case something goes wrong.” 17 y/o female
“I feel in my case that a good amount of how I keep myself up and how I carry myself has to do with how I model myself after my older brother when I was in middle school. And now it is more of a stage where I reject a lot of the things that he presented, but I mean I can’t deny that it’s you know, very crucial to every facet of my health.”  17 y/o male

“You need like adults in general, they can be community members, teachers, coaches, there is a lot of wealth of different things for each person, but some sort of role model.”  17 y/o male

“One aspect of [adult] relationships, it is important that they give you some amount of freedom or room to experience stuff on your own terms as opposed to mandated this is what you have to do.”  18 y/o male

**BROADER CONTEXTS (Physical Environment, Informational Environment, Financial Stressors)**

**Physical Environment and Health**

“There’s no sidewalks in Indianapolis! Yeah, if there’s cars driving and you know, I used to live close to my job and I didn’t have a car so I would walk over there, but I didn’t like it because there were no sidewalks. I had to walk on top of the grass.”  16 y/o female

“I used to be outside but seeing as how I can’t stay outside….I used to could stay outside past a certain hour, but thanks to people around my neighborhood….so stayin’ outside just went out the window. So therefore, I would…people stay on the Internet all the time.”  17 y/o male

“Yeah, I could be doing something constructive, but I’ll just be watching TV when there’s nothing on just trying to find something cause I’m bored and I don’t want to do what I wanna do…well, what I have to do.”  16 y/o male

**Informational Environment -- Harm Reduction**

“I mean, you can tell them it’s better to just not [drink], but I think the best way, especially in our generation, is to teach them how to be safe while they’re doing something like that. Not to do stupid stuff.”  16 y/o male

“Yeah, keep it real…I hate when people be like ‘don’t have sex, it is not for you’. I want someone to tell me sex is ok, but if you do this make sure that you do it this way. I am for real, say sex is good just wrap it up.”  18 y/o female

“They say you need to be abstinent but it doesn’t help. They should probably spend more time on you know, showing how to do it safely instead of saying not to do it…..So instead of just saying ‘Don’t have sex, don’t have sex’, and ‘Oh, here’s a condom, go have sex,’ but talk about safe sex. And you know, teach them….you know safer sex would be the best way to say it.”  16 y/o male
“I think we need alternatives other than, ‘Listen-don’t do it, or use a condom.’ How about ‘Okay, condoms fail whatever, you’ve caught syphilis. This I show you can go about,’ you know, ‘This is where you can go, this is what the treatment is,’ you know…instead of ‘Don’t do it. If you catch it this is what’s gonna happen.’” 17 y/o female

“For a lot of households it’s not a ‘be responsible, be smart’ instead it is a ‘don’t, just don’t’. We need the messages that say ‘be responsible, be smart.” 18 y/o male

“You need some health initiatives that really emphasize the parents to bypass the awkwardness so the kids don’t have someone preaching at them. You need a somewhat intimate environment, it has to be someone you respect. It doesn’t mean anything coming from one dude talking to 150 kids.” 17 y/o male

“It needs to be information that is practical for the world that we live in. So I really don’t think in this modern day saying you have to wait until marriage, that doesn’t work out very well because then kids rebel and they go have sex.” 17 y/o male

“We received a very scare tactics-esque sex education and health education, and that doesn’t work at all. We all think it is a joke, we don’t listen to what they say.” 18 y/o Male

**Informational Environment -- Respect for Youth**

“Last year we had this family that came in and they juggled and they did all these circus acts and then they’re like, “Don’t have drugs! So you can do what we do.” … I think it was almost worse than actually helpful because I mean, people laughed…I think it’s better for someone to just be serious with them, someone from a town or a place like theirs and just be serious and talk to them.” 17 y/o male

**Informational Environment – Mixed Messages**

“I think the school should like enforce more nutrition. Like, you see it, you walk around the school – they say ‘Oh, you guys can’t buy sodas,’ but there are soda machines everywhere. Why would they have them if they don’t want us to buy them?” 16 y/o female

“If you think about it school food is unhealthy. I meant they don’t force you to go through the line and get a tray…you got vending machines, you got Coke machines, you’ve got pizza every day cause they’ve got a pizza line.” 17 y/o female

**Stress and Emotional Health Linked to Financial Stressor, Time Pressures, Unsafe Physical Environments**

“….you don’t ever get a break. It’s a constant stress….like oh I have to get this done. Oh, but that’s done now I have to get this done. It’s like so like, draining and you just drone on in the same sort of like, deadlines….it really does mess with you.” 19 y/o male
“The day is too short sometimes, like especially when I have to work at 4:00 pm, I get out at 9:30 pm, have to do my homework, take a shower and wake up at 6:00 in the morning and start again. You don’t have enough time for yourself, to take care of yourself.” 16 y/o female

“Say you have your own schedule right, and you’re like, “Okay, I’m gonna go to school, after school I’m gonna study, then I’m gonna work,” but then your parents they need something or they need help so you’re schedule’s like over. You have to do what they tell you.” 17 y/o female

“I think our emotional health… we’re in college, we’re doing a lot of work, we’re growing as you know, young adults, trying to identify who we are, we’re learning about bills, finances, credit cards, all this other stuff and it just becomes extremely overwhelming and then summer happens and then maybe if you’re lucky you can relax a little, but I know a lot of people end up working just as hard.” 20 y/o male

“People want to experiment with things and that’s part of this part of your life. But then again, at this part of your life you’re being stacked with all this stuff that’s supposedly going to be the foundation of your livelihood for the rest of your life. So you know, you’re doing things that are gonna take you away from that and then expecting to rise to that occasion at the same time. And, and the stress of all that is leading, it leads some people more in the other direction because, because they need a release from what they’re doing. And I mean, it’s just all… it’s all back and forth. I mean, it’s a balancing act between what you want to do and what you’re supposed to do.” 20 y/o male

“And about the sleep it’s like, okay, we’re in school, especially us- we’re seniors. We’re trying to graduate on time. So it’s like, go to work, after work… I mean, you have things to do at home too, for example clean, or help your brother or sister with their homework or me.” 18 y/o female

“Right. That’s how people get pressured into having sex. That’s one of ‘em. They put, yeah, they put their stress out on other things. Make themselves feel better. That’s why people smoke weed. Yeah, smoking weed. Take your stress away. Yeah, but then you become, it becomes a habit and then you mess up your life ‘cause uh, maybe you could have prevented this, like 90% of the time.” 17 y/o male

“I could choose to go my little sister’s soccer game and then not be able to study for a test or I could skip the game and do well on the test. I mean it is a juggling act, but I do think that there is some sacrifice.” 17 y/o female

“I need to get this done and this done, and sometimes doing homework or something is more important than an extra 45 minutes of sleep. A lot of problems that we have is when other people put too much emphasis on our grades, so we give up an extra hour of sleep which isn’t necessarily healthy.” 17 y/o male

**Influence of Time and Financial Pressures on Health Decisions**

“Right. And so instead of buying one hamburger at McDonald’s, since it’s a dollar you buy like 3 double cheeseburgers, a Big Mac, and all that stuff.” 17 y/o male
“Sometimes you don’t have enough time to cook something healthy so you just go to McDonald’s and get something. Like really quick.” 17 y/o male

“Time. If you’re working however many jobs or whatever and school and everything, you don’t have time to… I mean, you could obviously have time to make healthy foods, well- I guess you might not if you throw a hot pocket in the microwave before you leave for work.” 16 y/o male

“Well, okay, so I work a lot and then by my work there’s so many fast food places and we only get a half hour to eat. So the thing you do is, you know, you run across the street or even the same parking lot, you run across the parking lot. You call before you go and then you eat real fast and you pay real cheap. And… everyone does that at work ‘cause it’s easy and fast and cheap.” 16 y/o female

**Lack of Insurance**

“When I was a kid, I was on Medicaid, and when I turned eighteen I didn’t have it anymore. I mean, if I go to the doctor I pay. And pretty much the only reason I have any coverage is because my mom gets a little bit of insurance through work. So most of the time I’m sick I don’t go to the doctor.” 19 y/o female

“At my house, only, there’s only us kids, but they gave my mom, I don’t know… they gave my mom Medicaid, like whenever if its’ an emergency, she can go. Just if it’s an emergency, she can go.” 16 y/o female